

TESTIMONY OF ROBERT G. GUERTIN SUBMITTED TO THE APPROPRIATIONS AND HIGHER
EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON FEBRUARY 8, 2016

*H.B. No. 5044 - An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the
Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017.*

Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and members of the Committee, I, Robert G. Guertin, a Board Member Eastern AHEC, Inc. submit this testimony to support the CT Area Health Education Network regarding [making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017](#). Eastern Area Health Education Center (AHEC), Inc. is a non-profit organization in which our main target is our youth, recruiting minority students, nontraditional and first generation college students with the goal in preventing the risk of these individuals of dropping out of school. AHEC is a national organization, Eastern AHEC, Inc. is part of the Connecticut AHEC Network (CTAHEC) and is the first non-profit AHEC to open its doors in Connecticut in 1996, marking 20 years this month as an established organization.

The CT AHEC Programs or network directly supports primary care workforce development in the state by “connecting students to careers in health, professionals to communities, and communities to better health.” Funded since 1997, the CT AHEC Program provides state-wide services to more than 10,000 residents, annually (<http://www.publichealth.uconn.edu/ct-ahec.html>). As the demographics of the state continue to change, the primary care workforce must expand and respond to meet those changes. The CT AHEC Program is an invaluable resources to address these challenges at both a state and local level.

The CT AHEC Program utilizes federal, state and private funding to support:

- Inter-professional education and community based training programs for health professions students
- Promotion and retention of primary care providers in collaboration with state agencies
- Cultural competence and medical interpreting training to health professionals and trainees
- Dissemination and recruitment of health professional trainees in the National Health Service Corps
- Continuing medical education programs for public health and health care professionals
- pipeline educational programs to raise awareness of health careers for pre-health professions learners

As part of the primary care workforce development in the state, the CT AHEC Program provides leadership for the State Innovation Model grant’s Community Health Workforce Development and Integration (<http://www.healthreform.ct.gov/ohri/site/default.asp>). Bringing collaborative stakeholders together to build infrastructure, policy and sustainability to the development of a Community Health Worker workforce in Connecticut. Likewise, CT AHEC’s support of the Health Occupations and Technology Careers in Connecticut (HOT Guide) provides residents with an invaluable resource to learn about health and biotechnology careers and opportunities in the state (www.healthcareersinct.com).

Supported by federal, state and private dollars, the CT AHEC Program Office is located at UConn Health

in Farmington, CT. The 4 regional AHEC Centers in collaboration with the Program Office extend UConn Health's reach state-wide. The AHEC Program responds to local needs and partnerships that address community health needs which include oral health, veteran's mental health, youth mental health first aid, teen health literacy, homeless and migrant farm worker access to health care.

The AHEC network in Connecticut is impactful and provides the community with access to health care resources and programs for higher learning which are both influential in developing a healthcare workforce. This enhances access to culturally and linguistically appropriate healthcare education and increases the diversity, quality, and distribution of future healthcare professionals.

As mentioned, the CT AHEC Network receives state, federal, foundation and private support. Without this funding from these various funders essential programs such as; Medical Interpreter Program, Youth Health Collegiate Services (YHSC), Collegiate Health Service Corp (CHSC), Covenant Soup Kitchen Health Clinic, Retention and Recruitment Initiative (RRA) and Veterans Mental Health Initiative will no longer be offered to Connecticut state residents as it has been for the last 18 years. These programs have been heavily relied on all these years, I personally feel that if CT AHEC Network is not restored its funding that it would be very detrimental to the community, would leave a unreplaceable void, but also be very difficult to be reinstated in the future if eliminated for the 2015-2017 state budget.

I thank you for your time and consideration with this matter.

Robert G. Guertin -Board of Directors

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